

## Opinion

# Canadians reacting to threats of terrorism

TORONTO - The escalating war in the Persian Gulf is sparking increasingly stringent anti-terrorist measures in Ontario, not only by officials at sensitive locations but even amongst the public.

But a spokesman for an independent strategic studies organization says that Canada is not a high priority terrorist target, and people should not be swept up in a tide of panic.

Citizens "should remain calm and try to go about your lifestyle in as calm and normal a way that you can," said Chris Cushing of the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies.

Stores which sell surplus armed forces supplies in Toronto report sharply increased demand for gas masks from the public, and some said they are already out of stock.

Drug stores in the east end of Metro Toronto also report they have sold out of potassium iodine pills designed to delay the absorption of radioactive iodine in the event of fallout from a possible attack on the nearby nuclear power plants.

Meanwhile, federal and provincial officials, while acknowledging that security has been beefed up at locations sensitive to attack

by pro-Iraqi or anti-American terrorists, have clammed up on the measures being taken.

Official focus is centred on such sensitive locations as nuclear power stations, airports, government offices or armed forces weapons arsenals where attacks could come in reprisal for Canada's support of the U.S.-led assault on Iraq and Kuwait.

A spokesman for Ontario Hydro, which has three nuclear power stations, said the utility was "responding accordingly" to the situation.

"It's difficult, the more one says the more one invites," said Douglas Armour, "but you can judge for yourself."

Pearson International Airport, outside of Toronto, is not even answering security queries. Public Relation spokesman Bruce Reid referred questions to Transport Canada officials in Ottawa following Allied Forces' action on Wednesday.

A spokesman at Transport Canada acknowledged that "security has been enhanced at all Canadian airports both for flights into and out of Canada, and within the country."

Security at Canadian border crossing points has also been intensified, with holders of Iraqi



Queen's Park Bureau

by Pauline Johnson  
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and Kuwaiti passports being subjected to two screenings before being allowed entry, according to television station reports.

Premier Bob Rae told reporters after the outbreak of war that his best contribution to security arrangements "would be to keep my mouth shut."

However, there are noticeably more security officers on duty at the Ontario legislature. While they are not armed, reporters have been told they have quick access to arms if necessary.

The provincial government also has an Emergency Planning department, within the Ministry of the Solicitor General, to deal with public safety operations in the event of a disaster like an at-

tack on a nuclear power station.

Government officials also have access to an underground bunker at Canadian Forces Base Borden, southwest of Barrie.

Both the Save-More Sport Shop and the Army Store in Toronto report increased demand for gas masks in the past few days, and they are already sold out.

Kanital Chiba at the Army Store said he usually sells about six gas masks a year but he has sold about 24 in the past two days, and cannot get more from his supplier.

While some masks are being sold for use in anti-war protests some "are going to families who are scared," said Chiba.

He said his masks are of the latest design and do work, but other stores said they are not selling the masks with the assurance that they work.

However, Cushing cautioned against the public resorting to such "alarmist" measures. He said that in his opinion many of the masks could be obsolete and there is a danger of self-injury or suffocation by people who are not trained to use them.

Reports of deaths in Israel, after Iraqi missiles hit the country, said that four people died of suffocation after failing to open

the plugs or remove seals in their gas masks.

Cushing said that the United States and Europe are far more likely to be the target of terrorist attacks than Canada - the U.S. because it led the Allied Forces against Iraq and Europe because it has a historical network of terrorist organizations.

The danger to Canada is more because it could be used as a transit route for terrorists to the U.S., he said.

However, he said, there are two types of terrorism threats. The first is the organized terrorist such as a professional Iraqi agent. Canadian security services, which are on full alert, are very aware of this type of threat and prepared to track the agent and deal with them.

The second type, and potentially more dangerous, is "the loner" the unbalanced individual, who watches television and wants to make headlines or who is upset," Cushing said.

"Obviously, people should keep an eye out (for this) but buying gas masks is just hysteria," Cushing said. "It gives in to the goal of terrorists which is to terrorize. I think it is an over-reaction and my advice is that the chances of an individual being hurt are very slight."

# Anti-war movement in U.S. threatens Bush

WASHINGTON - The rapid rise of an anti-war movement across the United States looms as a growing threat to the popular support President George Bush has enjoyed so far for Operation Desert Storm.

Unlike the Vietnam War, where an anti-war movement built slowly over years as Americans questioned their country's goals in Southeast Asia, large peace protests and rallies were seen across the country before the first bomb was dropped last Wednesday.

"Even veterans of the peace movement are astonished at how swiftly the effort has grown," the Wall Street Journal observed. "The swelling anti-war movement serves as a reminder of the political price Mr. Bush could pay if he commits U.S. troops only to find that a war drags on or produces high casualties."

Minutes after word came from Baghdad that an attack was under way last Wednesday evening, the number of protesters in

front of the White House started to swell.

So far, the rallies have been pint-sized compared to the massive protests that tore American society apart during the Vietnam War. But the rhetoric and techniques have been borrowed from that war to reflect the concern that the gulf crisis could become another quagmire like Vietnam.

This week, a march from the National Cathedral and an "Eve of Destruction" rally attracted thousands. A folk singer played Bob Dylan protest songs as another group held a "die-in."

Some protesters erected a small replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with the names of U.S. soldiers who had died in accidents during the Persian Gulf buildup. While all this activity was going on, police stood in line along Pennsylvania Avenue to guard the White House, a grim reminder of the worst days of Vietnam.

Washington Bureau

by Kevin Bell  
Thomson News Service



Reports from the Middle East indicate that American troops have been disturbed by television scenes of anti-war demonstrations, but the White House has downplayed their effect.

"I think the demonstrations are all part of the democratic process and we accept them," presidential spokesperson Marlin Fitzwater told reporters. "I think it's fair to say that we've been trying to prepare the American people since Aug. 2 on the possible use of

force."

However, Fitzwater also urged Americans and Congress to show support for the soldiers, a sign that the White House may be nervous about the effect on troops' morale.

Early polls show overwhelming support for Bush's decision to strike, but that may reflect a "rally around the president" mood in the first days after the launching of Operation Desert Storm. Other polls have shown the American people may be deeply divided.

The results of the latest poll by the New York Times and CBS News shows Americans are split on military action. The poll, conducted several days before conflict broke out, found that 47 per cent of the respondents supported military action to force Iraq from Kuwait, while 46 per cent wanted the U.S. to rely on sanctions. The remainder were undecided.

The rallying cry for the anti-war movement has become "no

blood for oil," reflecting the belief the primary motivation for war is to ensure a plentiful supply of inexpensive gasoline. The Pentagon's eagerness about discussing the U.S. casualties after the first raids indicates how sensitive the American people are to the loss of life to attain U.S. goals in the Persian Gulf.

Other objections to war abound, from what is perceived to be a disproportionate representation of minorities in the armed services to the miserly contributions of Germany and Japan to the United Nations' effort. And anti-war vitriol has come from both the left and right wings.

Add them to an already divided public, and Bush may see the anti-war movement explode. It's no wonder he has been promising that any conflict will be short and sharp.

Anything else could be devastating to his political future.

# 1990 was not kind to budget forecasters

OTTAWA - About a year ago, the Finance Department issued a paper touting the accuracy of its economic forecasts.

Of 14 forecasts regularly surveyed, the study gloated, the department's predictions published along with the federal budget were the second-most accurate. A Finance spokesman wouldn't say who ranked first for reasons of confidentiality.

Well, an institution that sticks its neck out so blatantly is bound to come under closer scrutiny. The department might well wish now it hadn't been so bold.

The fact is that 1990 was not kind to the budget forecasters. Finance was disastrously off in its predictions on interest rates. It overestimated unemployment in the first half of the year and then undershot the mark.

The budget predictions of last February foresaw modest economic growth last year but the final figures will show an actual decline in production for 1990 as a whole. Finance also blew its guess about how far the American economy would fall, and when the United States sneezes, Canada catches a cold.

Naturally, some error might be attributable to the Persian Gulf crisis, which has now broken out into war. But much of the miscalculation occurred before Iraq marched into Kuwait last August.

There's no inclination here to scold at the department's failures in 1990. All economic seers know the risks of the game and that sometimes they'll be wrong, just as every columnist can miss the mark.

### TAXPAYERS PAY

But when the Finance Department errs in its budget predictions, it costs taxpayers. The goof on interest rates, for instance, means the federal deficit for the current fiscal year ending in March could be as much as \$3 billion higher than anticipated.

Finance Minister Michael Wilson has already revised the deficit figure up to about \$30 billion from the original \$28.5 billion. Some economists believe Wilson is still off target and the final number will be far worse.

While person income tax collections in the first half of 1990 were large, the deeper-than-anticipated recession has eroded

Ottawa Bureau

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Ottawa's corporate tax revenues by about three per cent. And the declining economy, leading to increased unemployment, has pushed jobless benefits 17 per cent higher and federal welfare contributions up 20 per cent.

How wrong was Finance? It's prediction for consumer price hikes of 4.7 per cent was close to the mark. But the budget forecast said overall economic growth in 1990 would be 1.3 per cent. The latest guesses - because not all the data are in yet - suggest a shrinkage in production of goods and services of about one per cent from the onset of the recession last spring until December.

The average interest rate forecast for 90-day commercial paper was 11.1 per cent. We're looking now at about 13.1 per cent.

Finance estimated unemployment would average 8.5 per cent for the final three months of 1990, but the figure will be closer to 9.2 per cent. In human terms, that's about 85,000 workers without jobs that Finance did not expect.

And how about these quotes from the budget?

"The weakest period is expected to be from the fourth quarter of 1989 to mid-1990 ... The first quarter of 1990 could be particularly weak."

In fact, the economy grew by 0.5 per cent in the first three months of 1990, the only quarter of growth in the year. The weakest quarter last year was the October-to-December period.

"Growth is expected to rebound in the latter half of 1990 and in 1991."

Sorry folks, it's getting worse. Right now we are probably in the weakest period of the current recession, largely because the GST is dampening consumer spending. The private sector Conference Board is expecting a decline of 0.8 per cent in the January-to-March period before a modest recovery begins in the spring.

"The U.S. appears unlikely to experience a recession ... The U.S. economy is projected to regain momentum in the second half of 1990."

Unfortunately, the second half of 1990 is precisely when the American economy, so critical to our own, fell into recession.

Perhaps Finance will do better in its next budget forecast.

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